

REMARKS

In the July 31, 2007 Office Action, the title of the invention was objected to and claims 1-15 stand rejected in view of prior art. Also, the July 31, 2007 Office Action indicates that the information disclosure statement filed on December 19, 2005 fails to comply with 37 CFR 1.98(a)(3). No other objections or rejections were made in the Office Action.

Status of Claims and Amendments

In response to the July 31, 2007 Office Action, Applicants have amended the title of the invention and claims 1, 2 and 9 as indicated above. Thus, claims 1-15 are pending, with claim 1 being the only independent claims. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested in view of above amendments and the following comments.

Specification / Title of Invention

In the numbered paragraph 1 of the Office Action, the title of the invention is objected to as being too generic to be descriptive.

In response, Applicants have amended the title of the invention as indicated above. Applicants believe the amended title is clearly indicative of the invention to which the claims are directed.

Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Information Disclosure Statement

In the numbered paragraph 2 of the Office Action, the Office Action indicates the information disclosure statement filed on December 19, 2005 fails to comply with 37 CFR 1.98(a)(3) because it does not include a concise explanation of the relevance of each patent listed that is not in the English language.

Applicants respectfully assert that the information disclosure statement filed on December 19, 2005 complies with 37 CFR 1.98(a)(3) because Applicants submitted an English-language version of the international search report upon filing of the information disclosure statement. According to MPEP §609.04(a) II, the requirement for a concise explanation of relevance can be satisfied by submitting an English-language version of the search report which indicates the degree of relevance found by the foreign office. Applicants note that, in the image file wrapper of PAIR system, the English-language version of the

international search report submitted on December 19, 2005 was scanned in along with the Japanese-language specification of the international application as filed to make up a thirty-three page file labeled as "Documents submitted with 371 Applications". The English-language version of the international search report can be found on pages 30 and 31 of this thirty-three page file.

In any event, Applicants have attached herewith a copy of the English-language version of the international search report submitted on December 19, 2005. Applicants respectfully request the information disclosure statement submitted on December 19, 2005 be entered and the references cited therein be considered.

Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

In the numbered paragraph 3 of the Office Action, claims 1-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,445,261 to Kimura (hereinafter "Kimura patent") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,467,859 to Sahlberg (hereinafter "Sahlberg patent"). In response, Applicants have amended independent claim 1 as mentioned above.

More specifically, independent claim 1 now clearly recite that a reciprocating movement mechanism has a ***parallel link*** and a ***rotation motor***, the rotation motor being operatively coupled to the parallel link to transmit a ***rotary force in one rotational direction*** to the parallel link to reciprocatingly move the trough via the parallel link along the conveyance direction of the article, such that a movement of the trough in a direction opposite the conveyance direction is faster than a movement in the conveyance direction. This arrangement is ***not*** disclosed or suggested by the Kimura patent, the Sahlberg patent or any other prior art of record.

The Kimura patent discloses a vibratory feeder 1 that uses the electromagnet 43 to electromagnetically vibrating the trough 17. Thus, the Kimura patent ***fails*** to disclose or suggest a reciprocating movement mechanism having a ***parallel link*** and a ***rotation motor*** that is operatively coupled to the parallel link to transmit a ***rotary force in one rotational direction*** to the parallel link. Moreover, Applicants respectfully assert that the Kimura patent also ***fails*** to disclose or suggest ***reciprocatingly move*** the trough ***along the conveyance direction***. Generally speaking, the electromagnetic feeder such as one disclosed in the Kimura patent conveys an article placed in a trough by vibrating the trough with an

electromagnet *in the direction of the vector summation of the vertical direction and the conveyance direction*. For example, in the Kimura patent, the direction of vibration is indicated as the arrow A shown in Figure 2 (please see column 4, lines 47-52 of the Kimura patent). Thus, in the Kimura patent, the trough is *not* reciprocated *along the conveyance direction*. Furthermore, as acknowledged in the Office Action, the Kimura patent also *fails* to disclose or suggest asymmetric vibration (i.e., a movement of the trough in a direction opposite the conveyance direction is faster than a movement in the conveyance direction).

The Sahlberg patent is apparently cited in the Office Action to show the asymmetric vibration. However, the Sahlberg patent *fails* to provide for the deficiencies of the Kimura patent with respect to the reciprocating movement mechanism having the *parallel link* and the *rotation motor* that is operatively coupled to the parallel link to transmit a *rotary force in one rotational direction* to the parallel link as now recited in independent claim 1. More specifically, the Sahlberg patent merely discloses a piston/cylinder arrangement and an associated pneumatic valve assembly to move a sliding carriage coupled to an article-carrying surface. Therefore, similarly to the Kimura patent, the Sahlberg patent *fails* to disclose or suggest a reciprocating movement mechanism having a *parallel link* and a *rotation motor* as now recited in independent claim 1.

Accordingly, since *neither* the Kimura patent *nor* the Sahlberg patent discloses the *parallel link* and the *rotation motor* that is operatively coupled to the parallel link to transmit a *rotary force in one rotational direction* to the parallel link as now recited in independent claim 1, the hypothetical combination of the Kimura patent and the Sahlberg patent could *not* render the limitations now recited in independent claim 1 obvious.

It is well settled in U.S. patent law that the mere fact that the prior art can be modified does *not* make the modification obvious, unless the prior art provides an *apparent reason* for the desirability of the modification. Accordingly, the prior art of record lacks any apparent reason, suggestion or expectation of success for modifying the patents to create the Applicants' unique arrangement of the transport apparatus.

More specifically, with the arrangements now recited in independent claim 1, the parallel link is removably coupled to the trough via the first protruding part and the depressed part. The parallel link is also operatively coupled to the rotation motor so that the parallel link can be reciprocated back and forth along the conveyance direction *simply by rotating the*

rotation motor in one rotational direction. Therefore, an accelerated velocity in the vertical direction imposed upon the trough is small in the present invention as compared to the electromagnetic feeder that vibrates the trough in the direction of the vector summation of the vertical direction and the conveyance direction such as one disclosed in the Kimura patent. Moreover, the electromagnetic feeder as disclosed in the Kimura patent conveys an article by imposing a large, accelerated velocity upon the trough in the vertical direction, and thus, the electromagnetic feeder needs to be provided with a lock mechanism (e.g., the clamping device 24 shown in Figure 2 of the Kimura patent) to rigidly secure the trough so that the trough does not become detached from a support member. On the other hand, since the accelerated velocity in the vertical direction imposed upon the trough is small in the transport apparatus as recited in independent claim 1, it is not required for the trough to be rigidly secured to the parallel link in the vertical direction. Therefore, with the present invention, it is not necessary to release a locking mechanism when removing the trough, and thus, the trough can be easily removed from the reciprocating movement mechanism.

Accordingly, Applicants believe the transport apparatus as now recited in independent claim 1 is ***neither*** disclosed ***nor*** suggested by the Kimura patent, the Sahlberg patent, or any other prior art of record, whether taken singularly or in combination.

Moreover, Applicants believe that the dependent claims 2-15 are also allowable over the prior art of record in that they depend from independent claim 1, and therefore are allowable for the reasons stated above. Also, the dependent claims 2-15 are further allowable because they include additional limitations. Thus, Applicants believe that since the prior art of record does not disclose or suggest the invention as set forth in independent claim 1, the prior art of record also fails to disclose or suggest the inventions as set forth in the dependent claims.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn in view of the above comments and amendments.

Prior Art Citation

In the Office Action, an additional prior art reference was made of record. Applicants believe that this reference does not render the claimed invention obvious.

Appl. No. 10/561,388
Amendment dated October 10, 2007
Reply to Office Action of July 31, 2007

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In view of the foregoing amendment and comments, Applicants respectfully assert that claims 1-15 are now in condition for allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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